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A/52/84
S/1997/179
3 March 1997

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-second session
Item 71 of the preliminary list*
GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-second year

Letter dated 3 March 1997 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward to you herewith the text of a statement issued on 28 February 1997 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia.

I should be grateful if you would circulate the statement as a document of the General Assembly, under item 71 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Movses ABELIAN
Chargé d'affaires

* A/52/50.

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ANNEX

Statement issued on 28 February 1997 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia

During the last week, Azerbaijan has been circulating statements with regard to so-called illegal transfer of arms to Armenia. In its statements, Azerbaijan relies exclusively on the unofficial information provided by Minister Aman Tuleyev of the Russian Federation. This information has not been confirmed by any of the interested parties. As is known, the State Duma of the Russian Federation has opened an investigation into the matter.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia regrets that Azerbaijan, once more, has succumbed to the temptation of exploiting any opportunity in pursuit of its political goals. The Ministry is concerned by the Azerbaijani attitude and is inclined to assess it as Azerbaijan's intention to deviate from negotiations and embark on the path of military adventurism.

The Ministry would like to note that, since the establishment of the ceasefire in the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, Azerbaijan has been consistently violating the letter and the spirit of the ceasefire agreement, the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and the decisions of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

During 1993-1995, Azerbaijan purchased from Ukraine 150 battle tanks in three shipments, and 10 combat aircraft. Azerbaijan has notified the member States of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe about these purchases through its notes dated 3 November 1993 and 12 December 1993 and two notes dated 26 April 1994.

In addition to the above-mentioned arm transfers, according to our information from reliable sources, during the same period Azerbaijan purchased 12 MiG 21, 4 SU-15 and 2 SU-25 combat aircraft, and 100 T-55 battle tanks, about which the Treaty community was not notified. In the spring of 1994, a large quantity of spare parts for T-62 battle tanks were transported to Azerbaijan on a special flight. In late 1995, Azerbaijan acquired, through the KOFISA firm, semi-active laser-guided GANKAB-500L air bombs and surface-to-air anti-radar Kh-25ML and Kh-29L missiles. In 1996, 2,600 BM-21 missiles were also shipped to Azerbaijan.

According to our information, Azerbaijan has already entered into an agreement to receive an additional 8 SU-24 combat aircraft, and 18 aircraft engines. Azerbaijan will also receive missiles for the Uragan missile launchers. A large number of foreign experts and technicians are involved in the operations of the Azerbaijani No. 102 tank and No. 307 helicopter engine factories. They also plan to start joint production of engines for surface-to-surface guided missiles, turbo jet engines for aircraft and OT-5600 and TIP-9600 radio stations.

Azerbaijan is also in serious non-compliance and violation of the provisions of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. According to

its notifications and annual exchange of military information as at 1 January 1997, Azerbaijan significantly exceeds its notified maximum levels for holdings in three categories of the equipment limited by the Treaty (battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles and artillery units). In the battle tank category, it holds 285 units against the 220 permitted; in the armoured combat vehicle category 785 against 220; and in artillery 336 units against 285.

Along with this, the destabilizing accumulation of forces by Azerbaijan in Nakhichevan is also of concern. In the armoured combat vehicle category alone, 428 out of its 785 units, plus the 107 vehicles at the disposal of Interior Ministry forces, are stationed on the territory of the Nakhichevan republic. This is despite the limit of 220 as the maximum level for armoured combat vehicle holdings for the entire Azerbaijani territory. There is additional destabilizing accumulation of forces along the contact line between Nagorny Karabakh and Azerbaijan, particularly at two centres, Gianja and Kurdamir.

The exploitation of the unsubstantiated facts of Minister Tuleyev's statement by a country with these kinds of gross violation is a matter for serious concern.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia qualifies this most recent Azerbaijani move as a preparatory campaign to justify its plans for a military solution to the Nagorny Karabakh conflict.

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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS, INCLUDING ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-second year

Letter dated 3 March 1997 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward to you herewith the text of a statement issued on 3 March 1997 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia.

I should be grateful if you would circulate the statement as a document of the General Assembly, under item 114 (b) of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Movses ABELIAN
Chargé d'affaires

* A/52/50.

ANNEX

Statement issued on 3 March 1997 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia

The Azerbaijani statement of 22 February 1997, with regard to what they call the Khojalu event, is the most cynical and vicious statement ever made by Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan refers shamelessly to a 1992 military event, where, according to then-Azerbaijani President Mutalibov, the responsibility for the slaughter of the civilian population of the mostly Azeri city of Khojalu near the capital Stepanakert of Nagorny Karabakh fully falls on the Azeri opposition group, the Azerbaijani National Front.

In the days following the event, President Mutalibov, in an interview with Czech journalist Dana Mazalova published in the 2 April 1992 issue of the Russian newspaper Nizavisimaya Gazeta, said that the militia of the Azerbaijani National Front actively obstructed and actually prevented the exodus of the local population through the mountain passages specifically left open by Karabakh Armenians to facilitate the flight of the civilian population.

(On this matter, the September 1992 report of the Helsinki Watch international non-governmental organization quotes an Azerbaijani woman who says that Armenians had notified the Azerbaijani civilian population to leave the town with white flags raised.) In fact the Azerbaijani militia shot those who attempted to flee.

The hope and intention of the Azerbaijani opposition was to utilize civilian losses of such a magnitude to instigate a popular uprising against the Baku regime and seize the reins of power. Azerbaijan does not stop at simply distorting the truth. Not only does it falsely attribute its own opposition's merciless slaughter of Khojalu's civilian population to Armenians, it brazenly characterizes the killings as "distinctively inhumane and cruel" and "massacres". In so doing Azerbaijan fully comprehends that for the Armenian people these terms unfailingly evoke memories of massacre and genocide in Armenians' distant - and recent - past.

It is not coincidental that Azerbaijan has dared to make this statement on the anniversary of the most bloody event of Armenia's recent history. On 28 February 1988, when the people of Nagorny Karabakh were arguing by peaceful and constitutional means for their right to self-determination, Azerbaijani authorities organized and armed a mob, which began pogroms against Armenians in the Azerbaijani city of Sumgait. The Sumgait massacres were followed by killings and pillaging in Gianja in November 1988 and Baku in January 1990.

In the spring of 1991, the very leaders of the current Azerbaijani regime, assisted by the Soviet Army, organized the depopulation of the Armenian regions of Northern Artzakh, and the deportation of the Armenian population of Nagorny Karabakh and the surrounding 24 regions. Helsinki Watch, in the above-mentioned report, testifies that "these events were intended to exacerbate the fear and

horror of ethnic Armenians in other parts of Azerbaijan" and lead to the deportation and ethnic cleansing of more than 800,000 Armenians.

These atrocities were followed by a cycle of large-scale Azerbaijani military offensives and operations designed to produce a military solution to the conflict by annihilating the population of Nagorny Karabakh.

Although such acts have all taken place in the last decades of the twentieth century, the people of Nagorny Karabakh experienced a similar fate during the first two decades of this century as well. The massacres and pogroms of 1905 in Baku, and 1918 and 1920 in Shushi, where the entire city of Shushi was burned and its whole population was annihilated, are still vivid memories.

Therefore, this statement can only be seen as a crude, gross violation of the norms and principles of international law. While fostering an aggressive and exclusive nationalism, Azerbaijan blatantly promotes and incites ethnic hatred towards the population of Nagorny Karabakh, with whom it continuously claims it can peacefully and harmoniously live together. Further, Azerbaijan proclaims it can guarantee Karabakh's security and peaceful existence, even while it advances distrust and enmity by falsely accusing Armenians and callously misrepresenting its own role and responsibility in recent events.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia once again reiterates the warning sounded by the President of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrossian, during the Lisbon summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, that, in the event of imposed Azerbaijani rule on Nagorny Karabakh, the people of Nagorny Karabakh will face the threat of genocide.

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-second session
Item 37 of the preliminary list*
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-second year

Letter dated 28 February 1997 from the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to bring to your attention the statement issued by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the decision of the Government of Israel to approve construction plans for Har Homa/Jabal Abu Ghneim.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under item 37 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) N. H. BIEGMAN
Permanent Representative of the
Netherlands to the United Nations

* A/52/50.

ANNEX

[Original: English and French]

Statement issued on 27 February 1997 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the decision of the Government of Israel to approve construction plans for Har Homa/Jabal Abu Ghneim

The European Union deeply deplores the decision of the Government of Israel to approve construction plans for Har Homa/Jabal Abu Ghneim, located on the West Bank in the Jerusalem area. The European Union has repeatedly stated that settlements in the occupied territories contravene international law and are a major obstacle to peace.

The European Union once again reaffirms its policy on the status of Jerusalem. East Jerusalem is subject to the principles set out in Security Council resolution 242 (1967), notably the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and is therefore not under Israeli sovereignty. The European Union considers that the Fourth Geneva Convention is fully applicable to East Jerusalem, as it is to other territories under occupation.

The European Union calls on Israel to respect its obligations under international law and to refrain from measures that have an eroding effect on the confidence necessary for the further implementation of the agreements and prejudge the outcome of the permanent status negotiations. The decision is especially regrettable since the signing of the Protocol on Hebron was a positive development that created a new momentum in the peace process and raised hope for further constructive steps in the process.

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-second session
Item 155 of the preliminary list*
MEASURES TO ELIMINATE INTERNATIONAL
TERRORISM

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-second year

Letter dated 3 March 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

With reference to the letter dated 3 February 1997 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/52/70-S/1997/108), I should like to reiterate certain observations that I deem to be indispensable in the light of Israel's insistence on continuing to ignore public opinion and on seeking to confuse and mislead it.

The tense situation in southern Lebanon and the escalation of violence there are the result of Israel's continued occupation of parts of Lebanese territory. This occupation has brought the Lebanese many human tragedies and much destruction and hardship, and it violates the norms of international law and the resolutions of the Security Council, especially its resolution 425 (1978) calling upon Israel to end its occupation, to cease its military actions against Lebanese territorial integrity and to withdraw forthwith its forces from all Lebanese territory.

Lebanon has time and again expressed its readiness to ensure security and the rule of law in southern Lebanon immediately on the withdrawal by Israel of its occupying forces in implementation of resolution 425 (1978), and this has been conveyed by its senior representatives in the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council and in many official statements issued by the Lebanese Government.

* A/52/50.

Lebanon has always cooperated with the United Nations and with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which operates in the south of the country, and the reports of the Secretary-General and the resolutions of the Security Council have commended the constancy of such cooperation. In his statement on behalf of the members of the Security Council following the adoption of resolution 1095 (1997) on 28 January 1997 (S/PRST/1997/1), the President of the Council commended the Lebanese Government for its successful effort to extend its authority in the south of the country in full coordination with UNIFIL.

As against this, Israel has not hesitated to proclaim its lack of trust in the Organization whenever the opportunity presents itself. It has not been reluctant to confront UNIFIL, and it has frequently shelled its positions and inflicted casualties on it.

Perhaps the best attestation to this fact is the deliberate shelling of the headquarters of the Fijian contingent of UNIFIL on 18 April 1996, which killed 120 civilians, most of them women, children and older persons who had taken refuge in the compound in the mistaken belief that they would there be safe from Israeli shelling. (See the report of the Secretary-General contained in document S/1996/337 of 7 May 1996.) The General Assembly, by its resolution 50/22 C of 25 April 1996, subsequently condemned the Israeli shelling of the UNIFIL compound.

We repeat that the actions that the representative of Israel refers to as acts of terrorism are acts of resistance to occupation and are directed against military elements of the occupation forces. They are actions that have the purpose of liberating national territory from foreign occupation, and they arose as a reaction to the occupation and in self-defence, it being an intrinsic right of peoples to defend themselves pursuant to the relevant international covenants and in accordance with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the various declarations adopted by the General Assembly in this regard, most recently the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations adopted by the Assembly in its resolution 50/6 of 24 October 1995.

The Lebanese Government has affirmed its commitment to the goals of the Madrid Conference and to the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions and the principle of land for peace. Lebanon considers that the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which calls upon Israel to withdraw from the Lebanese territory it occupies to the internationally recognized boundaries, remains a basic condition for the achievement of peace.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 155 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Samir MOUBARAK
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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5 March 1997

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Fifty-second session
Item 71 (a) of the preliminary list*

GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT: NOTIFICATION OF NUCLEAR TESTS

Note by the Secretary-General

Pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 41/59 N of 3 December 1986 and 42/38 C of 30 November 1987, a communication, dated 21 February 1997, has been received from Australia and is reproduced in the annex to the present note.

* A/52/50.

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ANNEX

Information provided by States

AUSTRALIA

[Original: English]

[21 February 1997]

1. I have the honour to refer to resolution 42/38 C, entitled "Notification of nuclear tests", in paragraph 3 of which the General Assembly requests States that, while not themselves conducting nuclear explosions, possess data on such events to make those data available to the Secretary-General for circulation.

2. In accordance with that request, the Government of Australia has the honour to attach details of nuclear explosions detected by Australia from January to September 1996 (appendix I) as well as an explanatory memorandum (appendix II).

3. In the past the Government of Australia has provided quarterly reports, even if a test was not detected. In view of the adoption and opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in September 1996, in future the Government of Australia will submit data only if a test is actually detected. The Government of Australia has the honour to request that this advice be included in the report of the Secretary-General under the relevant agenda item of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

APPENDIX I

Quarterly reports on presumed underground nuclear explosions[a]

Month	Day	Universal time	Locality	Estimated body-wave magnitude[b]	Estimated yield (kilotons)[c]	Sequence number
			January-March 1996			
January	27	21 30	Fangataufa, France	5.3	10-40	96/1
February		Nil				
March		Nil				
			April-June 1996			
April		Nil				
May		Nil				
June	08	02 56	Lop Nor, China	5.9	40-150	96/2
			July-September 1996			
July	29	01 49	Lop Nor, China	4.9	5-20	96/3
August		Nil				
September		Nil				

[a] Information in the present bulletin was derived from Australian seismological facilities and from institutions in other countries cooperating in the monitoring of earthquakes and nuclear explosions.

[b] Unless otherwise noted, the estimated body-wave magnitude is that published by the United States National Earthquake Information Center and is based on observations of magnitude obtained from around the world, including from Australia.

[c] The yields are estimated using empirical equations, but there is no single agreed formula for the determination of yields. The yields estimated from these relations are not sufficiently accurate to determine compliance with international treaties.

APPENDIX II

Explanatory note

1. When a nuclear device is detonated underground, seismic waves radiate out in all directions. In order to establish that an underground nuclear explosion has taken place, pinpoint its location and estimate the size or yield of the blast, seismologists attempt to detect and analyse the several distinct types of seismic waves generated by the blast. Many factors affect the strength and clarity of those seismic waves, particularly the efficiency with which the explosion transmits energy to the surrounding earth. This efficiency is, in turn, dependent on local geological conditions such as the hardness and water content of the rock surrounding the explosion. Knowledge of the path through the earth which the seismic signals have travelled is also important.

2. An international network of seismic stations would add significantly to confidence in the ability to detect and locate the source of underground nuclear explosions, whenever conducted. Australia is actively engaged in the international effort to create such a network and, in addition, has established a number of bilateral links for seismic cooperation.

3. Experts estimate that confidence in an international seismic network would extend to coupled explosions with yields down to about 5 kilotons and possibly as low as 1 kiloton; beyond that, distinguishing nuclear explosions from earthquakes and other seismic "noise" becomes a more difficult task, and supplementary measures may be necessary. Estimating the yield of an underground explosion by remote seismic means is especially difficult given the data currently available. The relationship between seismic signals and yield is not fixed, but is subject to the vagaries of geology and a number of other unknown factors. At the present time we do not have openly available the large and authoritative database of explosions of known yield in various locations and geological conditions necessary to define the relationship with maximum confidence. That is why the footnotes to the table in appendix I of the present report stress that the estimated yields are not sufficiently reliable to determine compliance with international treaties. All such questions are being actively addressed in international forums.

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-second session
Item 59 of the preliminary list*
QUESTION OF EQUITABLE REPRESENTATION
ON AND INCREASE IN THE MEMBERSHIP
OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND
RELATED MATTERS

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-second year

Letter dated 4 March 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Mongolia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to bring to your attention the position of the Government of Mongolia concerning some questions of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under item 59 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Jargalsaikhany ENKHSAIKHAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/52/50.

97-06565 (E) 110397

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ANNEX

Position of the Government of Mongolia concerning some questions of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

The principled position of the Government of Mongolia on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council is well known. It has been expressed on a number of occasions by its representatives and is reflected in the official reply of the Mongolian Government, contained in document A/48/264/Add.3.

The negotiations that have been held on these questions at the United Nations, especially within the framework of the open-ended working group on this issue, have shown that Mongolia's position coincides with that of the vast majority of States Members of the United Nations.

These negotiations have also shown that matters other than those relating to equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council merit no less attention than the question of membership.

The Government of Mongolia believes that fuller participation by States Members of the United Nations that are not members of the Council (non-members of the Council) in the latter's proceedings should be encouraged, especially in the discussion of questions brought before the Council that affect the specific interests of those States. This would be in line with the spirit of the democratization process and of increased transparency in the functioning of the principal organs of the United Nations in general, and of the Security Council in particular. It would enhance the effectiveness of the Council and promote just and lasting solutions to the questions tackled by the Council. In this regard, the Government of Mongolia fully supports the proposal to interpret Article 31 of the Charter of the United Nations to mean that the notion "discussion" includes informal consultations, where, as a rule, most of the substantive discussions take place (see A/50/47/Add.1, annex X).

Furthermore, Mongolia believes that fuller participation in the proceedings of the Council by non-members whose interests are being affected should not be limited to making formal statements or to participating in informal consultations, however important they may be. Participation by non-members of the Council should be enhanced even in formal meetings, where official records are kept and where decisions on procedural issues could influence the debate and thus the consideration of draft resolutions and decisions.

Thus non-members should be entitled to participate to a fuller extent, without a vote, in the proceedings of the Council when it is considering issues that specifically affect the interests of those States. That participation could cover the inclusion or non-inclusion of the item on the Council's agenda; the submission of proposals and draft resolutions (so far allowed only with respect to questions considered under Article 32 of the Charter) which may be put to the vote at the request of any Council member; putting questions; making

clarifications; giving replies; proposing substantive or procedural motions for the Council's consideration; putting forward motions concerning the competence of the Council to consider a given question; and having access to all relevant documentation as well as the right to distribute documents relevant to the question under consideration.

Moreover, non-members of the Council should be entitled to participate in the work of the subsidiary organs (commissions and committees) established for consideration of the questions referred to in Articles 31 and 32 of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as in the discussion of their reports by the Council.

Mongolia believes that these changes could be institutionalized by amending the relevant provisions of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council without necessarily amending the Charter of the United Nations.

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Fifty-second session
Item 110 of the preliminary list*

PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

Letter dated 7 March 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the Ashgabat Declaration, adopted at the Inter-Parliamentary Conference on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Central Asia and Kazakstan, which was held in Ashgabat from 20 to 22 February 1997 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 110 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Aksoltan AKAEVA
Permanent Representative of
Turkmenistan to the United Nations

* A/52/50.

97-06694 (E) 170397 180397

ANNEX

The Ashgabat Declaration, adopted at the Inter-Parliamentary Conference on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, organized by the United Nations Children's Fund and Turkmenistan with the assistance of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and held in Ashgabat from 20 to 22 February 1997

Children's rights and priority measures to guarantee them in Central Asia and Kazakstan

We, the representatives of the parliaments of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, have gathered in Ashgabat to discuss the priority issues of child survival, development and protection in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to define effective and realistic strategies for implementing the Convention in Central Asia and Kazakstan and to adopt joint commitments on measures to ensure that every child in our independent countries has all it needs for a life in dignity and for its development, both today and tomorrow.

We are grateful to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Inter-Parliamentary Union and Turkmenistan, which jointly organized this important forum. We note with great satisfaction the participation in the Conference of parliamentarians from a number of States involved in joint projects with UNICEF in Central Asia and Kazakstan and extend to them our sincere thanks for sharing with us their experience in implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Recognizing the decisive role of parliaments in the noble cause of promoting efforts to ensure the priority and practical impact of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Central Asia and Kazakstan, we have reached a consensus on the following issues:

We accept and approve of the new vision of children expressed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children should be respected as human beings who have rights and require special care and assistance from the State and society. We recognize and respect the human dignity of every child.

We shall continue to bring up the children of our countries in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity. This will guarantee the stable and progressive development of human society.

We appeal to the Presidents of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to declare 1999 the year of protection of the rights of the child.

Children should occupy a more visible place in social, spiritual, cultural and economic development. We recognize the need for a sound legislative basis and adequate budgetary resources in order to find ways of solving problems related to child survival, development, protection and participation, and to elaborate the mechanisms needed to carry out decisions.

We shall promote cooperation among parliamentarians of our States, the strengthening of ties with UNICEF and other United Nations agencies, organs of State power and local self-government, non-governmental and religious organizations and the media, and shall also contribute to the exchange of information on, experience in and approaches to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In order to harmonize our legal systems with a view to implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we are in favour of establishing an inter-parliamentary group of interested countries to create and develop a legislative mechanism on the entire range of issues relating to child survival, protection and development. The first meeting of the group will be devoted to micronutrient and iodine deficiencies in children and will be held in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan. A decision on the date of the meeting will be taken at a later time.

At the national level, we shall endeavour to establish a mechanism for coordinating the actions and efforts of State and non-State bodies and organizations involved in implementing and monitoring the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We shall work for the further improvement of our national legislations in order to ensure that they reflect to the fullest extent possible the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to establish efficient and economically effective mechanisms for providing social services to children, primarily in the areas of health, water supply and sanitation, education, labour, social security and justice.

We shall encourage the establishment or strengthening of parliamentary committees, commissions and groups dealing with the problems of children in our countries with a view to undertaking a comprehensive review and appraisal of legislation on children and drafting recommendations on its amendment and amplification.

We shall support the development of legislation to improve the nutrition of children and women, in particular through the establishment and effective application of standards for labelling foodstuffs and their enrichment with nutrients (iodization of salt and enrichment of flour with iron), and bearing in mind the requirements of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes.

We stress the importance of conducting further research and drafting practical recommendations to improve the situation of girls and women in the context of national social and economic development in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Particular attention should be given to the education of the girl child, maternal mortality, and pregnancy among teenage girls.

We shall take effective measures to solve the problems of children living in exceptionally difficult conditions and to meet their needs for special care and protection. Child victims of the civil war in Tajikistan, children from the Aral Sea area, Semipalatinsk and other environmentally unsafe regions, children in children's homes and other institutions, children in conflict with the law, working children, children suffering from human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, and homeless children require special attention. Action must be taken at the national and local levels to prevent trafficking in children, their sexual exploitation and their abuse of drugs. Measures should be taken to protect the rights of refugee children, abused children and children deprived of a family environment, as well as the rights of disabled children. Children and families in particularly difficult circumstances should receive the necessary social support and guidance, including material assistance.

Civil society plays an important role in ensuring child survival, development, protection and participation and guaranteeing the quality and availability of social services. We will promote the development of civil society and encourage civilian activities in favour of children, in particular through the adoption of laws and norms that are in keeping with international practice. We recognize the importance of the participation of non-governmental organizations in social development and will promote active cooperation and partnership among non-governmental organizations and State bodies.

We recognize the crucial role of the family in child rearing and development. We shall help create an environment that forms responsible and informed parents, and shall promote the creation of a social structure that supports underprivileged families, encourage diverse forms of guardianship, including the placing of neglected children in other homes. The rights and opportunities of children and families should be expanded by ensuring their access to essential information, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Particular attention should be given to the training of social workers who deal directly with the problems of children and families.

We believe that it is essential to bring the text of the Ashgabat Declaration to the attention of the parliaments of our countries and to encourage the dissemination of the text of the Declaration in the mass media and its publication in national newspapers.